

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously Presented) A starter for cranking an internal combustion engine having a ring gear, the starter comprising:

an electric motor;

an output shaft driven by the electric motor;

a pinion gear driven by the output shaft;

a rotation-restricting ring fixedly connected to the pinion gear, the rotation-restricting ring having a series of depressions formed on its outer periphery, the pinion gear being helical-spline-coupled to the output shaft so that the pinion gear is pushed forward toward the ring gear to thereby engage with the ring gear when the output shaft is slowly rotated by the electrical motor and rotation of the pinion gear is restricted;

a rotation-restricting member adapted to be engaged with the depressions of the rotation-restricting ring to restrict rotation of the pinion gear;

a member for restricting backward movement of the pinion gear when the pinion gear is engaged with the ring gear; and

a bearing member connected to the rotation-restricting ring for absorbing friction between the rotation-restricting ring and the member for restricting backward movement of the pinion gear, the bearing member being a radial bearing for reducing abrasive force in the radial direction of the pinion gear,

wherein the pinion gear, the rotation-restricting ring and the bearing member are formed separately from one another, and

the bearing member is first connected to the rotation-restricting ring, and then the rotation-restricting ring is fixedly connected to the pinion gear.